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THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE
VOL. 86/NO. 24 JULY 4, 2022

SWP launches renewal drive, will put party on Pa. ballot

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

"We need a change. What we are going through is not sustainable," trucker Kenneth Kirkland told Chris Hoeppner, a railroad worker and Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress from Pennsylvania, at a truck stop in Bentleyville, south of Pittsburgh, June 14. "I get $4,200 for a load driving from Pennsylvania to California. With gas prices as they are, that only leaves me with $200 to $300 at best. I want to watch my family grow up but I can't!"

"That's why we need to organize, we need to build our unions into effective fighting organizations for our class," Hoeppner responded. "We also need to organize politically and break from the Democrats and Republicans who both back this capitalist system."

Hoeppner showed Kirkland *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes. This book shows "it's workers and farmers that need to

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Back Ukraine independence! Moscow's troops out now!

Solidarity of Ukraine, Russian toilers against Putin's war



Protest against Russian army-forced conscription of women's husbands in Moscow-occupied "Donetsk People's Republic" four months after they were sent to the front as cannon fodder.

BY ROY LANDERSEN

The monthslong battle by Ukrainian toilers fighting to beat back Moscow's bloody invasion and defend their national independence is now focused in the country's eastern and southern regions.

Moscow has massed its ground forces and is making costly gains in the Ukrainian Donbas, using murderous artillery bombardment to reduce areas to rubble. The vast majority of working people there are being forced to flee, mainly westward to safer Ukrainian cities.

After multiple attacks on the main cities of Kyiv and Kharkiv ended in heavy losses for Russian forces, despite superior firepower and facing falling troop morale, Moscow pulled back and moved its assault to the east. It has the advantage there of shorter supply lines from Russia and flatter terrain.

End US sanctions on Russia that hit working people hardest!

Rifts are widening among NATO-member nations as the main imperialist powers on the European continent seek ways to force the courageous Ukrainian fighters to stand down and make concessions. For these capitalist regimes the key is to halt the war's destabiliz-

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Workers need to unite to fight the scourge of soaring prices

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Skyrocketing prices continue to batter the lives of millions of workers and our families. In hopes of slowing inflation, the Federal Reserve — the U.S. government's national bank — has begun a series of sharp increases in interest rates, a policy shift that will ripple through the capitalist economy and increase the cost of borrowing money. This threatens a slowdown in production and trade, and increases prospects that workers will face growing job cuts and inflation at the same time.

The U.S. consumer price index rose to 8.6% for the 12 months ending in May, the largest yearly increase in over four decades. This includes even higher price hikes on essentials workers need, like groceries, that soared by 11.9%.

Prices for many items were actually much higher. Chicken was up 17.4%, the largest increase ever recorded. Pork increased 13.3%; eggs, 32%; milk, 15.9%. Gasoline prices jumped by nearly 50% to over $5 at the pump.

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Build solidarity with CN rail signal workers strike battle across Canada!



Militant/Fred Nelson

June 20 picket line at Vancouver, British Columbia, rail yard at start of signal workers strike. IBEW members are fighting for wage increases, humane work schedules, safety.

BY PHILIPPE TESSIER

MONTREAL — Some 750 signal and communications workers, members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, went on strike against the Canadian National Railway June 18 after negotiations broke down and the bosses demanded the union agree to submit unresolved issues to binding arbitration. Picket lines went up at rail yards from one end of Canada to the other two days later. The strike is the first by the union since 1997.

The workers play a critical role in the rail system, carrying out maintenance on track signals, at public crossings and on other rail infrastructure, making sure switches work properly, as well as responding to emergencies caused by weather, derailments and other unexpected developments.

Here in Montreal some 40 determined strikers formed a lively picket

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Liberals assault on Trump, Supreme Court is threat to political rights

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

The Democratic Party's relentless drive to prevent former President Donald Trump from running again in 2024 stepped up a gear starting June 9 with hours of televised House Select Committee hearings probing the Jan. 6, 2021, incursion at the Capitol building. These hearings are key for the Democratic Party's 2022 election campaign, as President Joseph Biden has failed to accomplish anything of note to relieve the blows working people are taking today, and his popularity is plummeting.

Armed with mounds of data, graphics, videos and hundreds of photos, the

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Over 10,000 rally against boss, UK gov't attacks on living standards

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — More than ten thousand trade unionists from around the U.K. joined a June 18 demonstration here to protest mounting assaults on living standards. The action was called by the Trades Union Congress.

"We're being mugged," Mesol Sapie, a Royal Mail delivery worker, told the *Militant*, reflecting anger over cuts to real wages, deteriorating working conditions and job insecurity. The Ed-

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Inside

NYC gov't seeks to keep people using drugs, reap tax bonanza

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Opioid overdoses ravaging cities and rural areas alike killed nearly 110,000 people in the U.S. last year. And increasing numbers of state governments are legalizing and seeking to profit off the sale of marijuana. At the Cannabis World Congress and Business Exposition in New York City June 2-4, Mayor Eric Adams gave a keynote speech encouraging everyone to "light up" and "spend some money" on marijuana there.

The city's health department has started posting ads in subway cars and buses telling drug users, "Don't be ashamed you are using, be empowered that you are using safely."

This course, promoted by liberals and middle-class radicals alike, is a deadly danger in the midst of a deepening epidemic of drug use, as today's crisis of dog-eat-dog capitalism tears at jobs, living conditions, families and social solidarity.

The road forward is to forge a working-class movement led by class-conscious fighters whose character, reliability and trustworthiness makes them capable of beating back the attacks by the bosses and their government. The last thing needed is for the government and a new wave of drug entrepreneurs to encourage workers and youth to get access to drugs. Yes, drugs like marijuana should be decriminalized, but the working-class movement should fight to convince toilers not to use them.

The New York ad campaign urges addicts not to feel embarrassed about abusing opioids, and offers tips on how to use fentanyl "safely," one of the deadliest and most addictive drugs. Every four hours someone dies from fentanyl use in New York City.

"Even if you are going for a night out to just do cocaine," one city subway ad says, "there is a possibility that fentanyl could end up in your drug supply."

Chiming in with some "advice," Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez urges users to "test your drugs" for fentanyl. Then, she points to health department instructions saying after such a test "you can drink them, snort them using a clean nasal spray device or wait until the water evaporates to use them."

Middle-class radicals like Workers World Party have jumped on the bandwagon. They promote the example of a group called the Drug User Liberation Front in Canada, which gives out "safer heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine."

City officials and their liberal backers say this drive to "empower" drug users is part of a "harm reduction" movement, which will reduce overdose deaths. But the opposite is the case.

A ballot measure passed in Oregon in 2020 decriminalized use of heroin and fentanyl and established addiction "treatment" centers to "help" drug users. Since then drug use in rural Eagle's Pass has risen 700% and overdose deaths by 120%.

The Socialist Workers Party has campaigned for decades against the spread of the drug profiteers as a deadly threat to the working class.



Ads on New York subways urge riders to keep using drugs "safely." Mayor Eric Adams boasts city will make $1.25 billion in tax revenues with legalized marijuana sales over next six years.

The use of drugs — illegal or not — is a threat to the workers' movement, and is incompatible with membership in the SWP. It is an obstacle to a way of life and activity that builds loyalty and discipline in fighting uncompromisingly for the interests of all working people.

The party points to the example of Malcolm X and other revolutionaries who urged the toilers to learn their self-worth through struggle. It points to how groups like Alcoholics Anonymous deals with addiction. People who join must halt all drinking, fight against relapses, and the group provides the necessary help to do so.

NY mayor pushes marijuana

In his talk at the Cannabis Exposition, Mayor Adams encouraged everyone to get high. He said he was "a bit disappointed" that there wasn't "a nice scent of weed" in the room.

The mayor has lauded now legal recreational use and sales of marijuana as a profit bonanza for the city — and as a jobs plan! In April he floated the idea of installing marijuana greenhouses on top of the city's public housing buildings and hiring residents to tend the crops. Once state-licensed retail sales of the drug are started up — slated for later this year — city authorities expect to collect over $1.25 billion in marijuana tax revenue over the next six years.

New York made recreational marijuana legal in March 2021, one of 18 states plus Washington, D.C., to have done so, so far. "When you include the additional states poised to legalize cannabis, the national forecast exceeds $72 billion in sales," the June 5 *New York Times* gloats.

Under the state's "social equity" policies, the first retail licenses to sell marijuana will go to people with a history of marijuana convictions, especially Blacks and Latinos.

The state-appointed Cannabis Control Board is also encouraging farmers to sign up for licenses to grow marijuana plants, 52 of whom had already done so by early April.

"New York's farms will be at the center of the most equitable cannabis industry in the nation," New York state Gov. Kathy Hochul bragged to the media.

The state is also putting poster ads in subway cars instructing working people on how to behave "responsibly" using marijuana. "Don't drive high," they preach, and, "If you choose to use, store it responsibly."

State officials also allow dealers to fiddle with the chemical composition of their weed to boost its effects, and their sales. In the 1970s and 1980s, street marijuana generally contained less than 5% THC, the chemical responsible for the drug's psychoactive effects. Today, marijuana sold at legal dispensaries often contains 25% THC.

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SWP launches campaigning

Continued from front page

organize to take power out of the hands of the capitalist class," Hoeppner said. Kirkland got the book.

Coming out of the June 9-11 International Active Workers Conference, Socialist Workers Party members are stepping up efforts to take the SWP's program to workers and farmers across the country.

One central feature of this effort is a four-week summer renewal drive, June 25 through July 26, to win 20% of those who subscribed to the *Militant* this spring to become long-term readers of the paper. The drive also includes selling a similar number of books by SWP and other revolutionary leaders to subscribers.

SWP members and supporters are campaigning for the party's ticket in Pennsylvania — Candace Wagner for governor, Osborne Hart for U.S. Senate, and Hoeppner. A three-week target effort is set for July 9-31 to collect 2,000 signatures, twice as many as required, to win ballot status for Hoeppner, the first time in decades that the SWP will have gotten on the ballot for federal office in Pennsylvania.

'We're being robbed by government'

"We're all being robbed by the government," Texas-based owner-operator Leroy Ford, 49, told Hoeppner at the same truck stop. "They are now making the industry more dangerous by experimenting with driverless trucks," he said. "Many of the big trucking companies don't care about safety." Pointing to a young woman, he said she "was sent out by the company she worked for after just three weeks of training. I'm training her now to become a driver."

"The bosses blame us when accidents happen, but the cause is their unrelenting profit drive," Hoeppner said. "The Pennsylvania attorney general blamed engineer Brandon Bostian for the death of eight passengers in an Amtrak crash. The fact was that rocks were thrown on the rail tracks, he lost situational awareness and the train derailed. Had Amtrak bosses not cut crew sizes and had installed a government-required braking safety device, things would have turned out differently. Our unions need to defend any worker blamed for the bosses' disregard for safety and fight for workers control in running the workplace."

"I want to help," Ford said. "I know a few radio stations in Dallas that might help spread your message." He subscribed to the *Militant* and bought a copy of *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs a leader of the SWP and organizer of the 11-state unionization drive that brought thousands of workers into the Teamsters union in the 1930s.

Campaigning in south Philadelphia June 17, Hoeppner met Chris Palmer, a former schoolteacher who now inspects houses. "I like what you're raising, but when I am at the voting station, I'll be thinking who to vote for so we don't have Donald Trump as president again," he said.

"There is no lesser evil," responded Hoeppner. "In 1964, many, especially on the 'left,' urged people to vote for Democrat Lyndon Johnson instead of Republican Barry Goldwater. They said that Goldwater would escalate the war in Vietnam. Johnson won and then he escalated that war!

"Many working people thought Obama would be a change and then they thought Trump would be," Hoeppner said. "As working people go through further class-struggle experiences more of us will realize that we can only rely on our class's capacity to organize independently from the bosses and their parties." Palmer subscribed to the *Militant.*

SWP on ballot in Minnesota, N.J.

The campaigning and ballot drive in Pennsylvania comes on the heels of the successful effort that placed the SWP ticket in Minnesota of Gabrielle Prosser for governor and Kevin Dwire for lieutenant governor on the ballot. Party members and supporters collected over 2,500 signatures fanning out across the state May 17-31, taking the SWP's program to meatpackers in Worthington, iron ore miners in the Iron Range, sugar refinery workers in Crookston and to many others. As they campaigned, they sold 95 subscriptions to the *Militant* and 57 books by SWP leaders and other revolutionaries.

The party's candidates in New Jersey, Joanne Kuniansky for House of Representatives in the 8th C.D. and Lea Sherman in the 9th C.D. have been notified they will appear on the ballot. Each filed petitions on May 24 with more than 150 signatures, triple the 50 signatures required for ballot status.

For more information or to join the *Militant* renewal campaign and the effort to get the SWP on the ballot in Pennsylvania, contact the nearest campaign office listed on page five.

Hugo Wils contributed to this article.



Militant/Hugo Wils

Chris Hoeppner, SWP candidate for Congress from Pennsylvania, right, with owner-operator Leroy Ford, left, at truck stop near Pittsburgh June 14. "I want to help" the campaign, said Ford.

Build solidarity with CN rail signal workers strike!

Continued from front page

line at the entrance to Taschereau yard. They picketed in a disciplined manner, crossing the street whenever the traffic light turned green. This slowed truck container traffic coming out of the yard.

"You were blocking the traffic all across the yard!" Canadian National train conductor Jonathan Chiasson told the strikers when he joined the line at the end of his shift. Four CN train conductors, members of the Teamsters union; and a track maintenance worker, a member of the Unifor union, joined strikers picketing during the day.

As of now, IBEW strikers are not trying to shut down Canadian National rail operations. CN bosses are continuing to run trains, saying they've put in place "contingency plans" to use management personnel and contractors to take over IBEW members' work. This is dangerous for all rail workers and people who live near the tracks.

The pickets were reinforced by some 15 Rolls-Royce aircraft strikers, members of the CSN (Confederation of National Trade Unions), who were locked out by their bosses almost four months ago. Their picket lines are just a few blocks away. They learned about the Canadian National signal workers strike that morning and decided to march over to express solidarity.

Others came to show their support, including Chris Hoeppner, a train conductor on CSX and member of the SMART-Transportation Division union in Philadelphia. Hoeppner is also a Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress.

The city cops rapidly joined CN's private police force in seeking to restrain the strikers from slowing down traffic, threatening them with fines and taking over manual control of the traffic lights.

The action had a big impact on workers who participated. "This is my first time on strike," Jair Moreno, a quality inspector for four years at Rolls-Royce, told the *Militant*. Rolls-Royce picket captain Steve Mayer, who organized the CSN delegation, said that "through the union solidarity we have received during our lockout, we learned what solidarity is. That's why we are here."

The IBEW is demanding a 15% wage increase over three years, while the bosses have offered only 8%. The official inflation rate in Canada has been 6.8% this year alone.

Proposed schedule changes are a key question. Canadian National is demanding workers take work assignments in territory covering half the country. Up to now assignments were confined to the provinces in which they lived. Workers' schedules will be set at seven days working and seven days off. The bosses are refusing to pay workers for travel time to get to work assignments on their days off.

Safety is also an issue. In Vancouver, British Columbia, strikers told *Militant* worker-correspondents that working in the avalanche prone Rockies is getting more dangerous, as CN bosses have been cutting the number of workers.

The short articles that have appeared in the big-business media echo the employers' efforts to turn workers and farmers against the strike. The *Toronto Globe and Mail*, the country's largest circulation daily, complained June 19 that the strike "threatens to exacerbate transport bottlenecks across the country." The next day the *Wall Street Journal* asserted that recent "disruptions have increased transportation costs and raised concerns about increased food prices for consumers at a time global food security has been threatened by the war in Ukraine, a major supplier of agricultural goods."

Strikers organized a rally in front of Canadian National's downtown headquarters at Montreal's main train station June 21, carrying picket signs and distributing a leaflet explaining the stakes in their fight. It pointed out that from 2019 to 2021 CN raked in over $17 billion in profits. "CN wants to raise the profits of its shareholders," the IBEW explained, "by holding back wage increases, and worsening the conditions for the working class."

"A union victory will globally better the working conditions for all workers, whether they are unionized or not," the union said, appealing for working-class support.

Show your solidarity! Join strike picket lines! Send support messages to IBEW System Council No.11, 119 Wheatland Dr., Cambridge ON N1P 1E2. Call (519) 622-2323. Email: ibewmartin@bellnet.ca.

Philippe Tessier is a train conductor at Canadian National and member of Teamster Canada Rail Conference Division 89.

Socialist Workers Party 2022 candidates

California
Eleanor García, US Senate
Joel Britton, Governor

Florida
Rachele Fruit, Governor

Georgia
Lisa Potash, US Senate
Sam Manuel, Governor

Illinois
John Hawkins, US Senate
Naomi Craine, Governor

Minnesota
Gabrielle Prosser, Governor
Kevin Dwire, Lt. Governor
David Rosenfeld, US Congress

Nebraska
Joe Swanson, US Congress

New York
Sara Lobman, US Senate

New Jersey
Joanne Kuniansky, US Congress
Lea Sherman, US Congress

Ohio
Samir Hazboun, US Senate
Jacquie Henderson, US Congress

Pennsylvania
Osborne Hart, US Senate
Candace Wagner, Governor
Chris Hoeppner, US Congress

Texas
Alyson Kennedy, Governor
Gerardo Sánchez, US Congress

Washington, DC
James Harris, Mayor
Arlene Rubinstein, Delegate to House

Washington state
Henry Dennison, US Senate

Over 10,000 at UK labor rally

Continued from front page
inburgh postal worker is one of 115,000 members of the Communication Workers Union set to ballot over strike action in response to the bosses' insulting 2% wage offer.

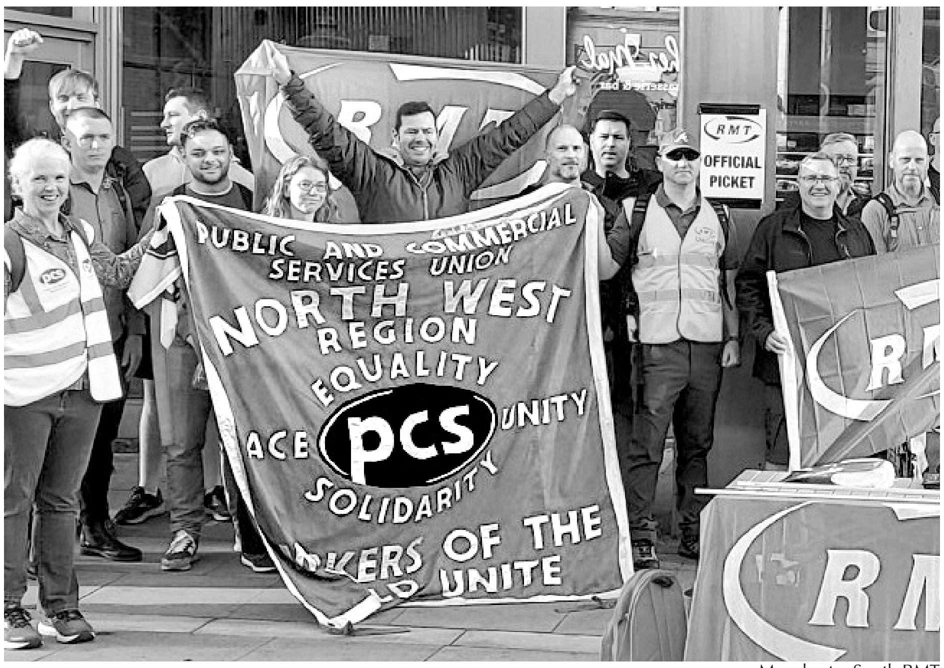
Demonstrators cheered as a contingent of hundreds of members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union entered Parliament Square. Forty thousand RMT members are taking three days of strike action this week to demand better pay and oppose job cuts. Network Rail, the lead company of the 14 being struck, has offered a 2% wage raise, plus two further increases of 0.5% conditional on increased "productivity." A separate one-day stoppage by RMT members on the London Underground will coincide with the national action.

A contingent of train cleaners employed by contract company Churchill joined the march. Since April 27 they have been taking days of strike action to demand 15 pounds an hour ($18.40) and sick pay. Most are on the national minimum hourly wage of 9.50 pounds. "We went straight from our picket line to the demonstration," strike leader Rositsa Tomova told the *Militant*.

Labour Party leader Keir Starmer joined the government and employers in opposing the national rail strike. Transport Minister Grant Shapps has tried to undermine support for rail workers. "The RMT is punishing millions of innocent people," he said, from students "to people trying to get to hospitals."

But marchers were not buying Shapps' argument. "Nurses support the rail strikes," read a large handmade banner carried by members of the Royal College of Nursing.

"We've come to bring solidarity to rail workers and all others fighting for wage rises," said Gary Walker, Unite convener at Chep in Manchester where pallet workers recently struck for 19 weeks and won a 9% pay raise. Fourteen Chep workers joined the demonstration.



Manchester South RMT
Picket line by rail workers in Manchester, England, June 21, part of daylong strike actions by more than 40,000 RMT members across the country for better pay and opposing job cuts.

Measured by the government's consumer price index, inflation is over 9%. For most workers the impact of rising prices is greater still. Real wages have declined since the 2008 financial crisis.

Women workers have been hit hard, earning 15% less than men on average. And women are disproportionately hired on zero-hours contracts that have no guaranteed income and cover over 1 million workers today. The government crows that employment is up since the end of the pandemic, but the labor force participation rate — a measure of the numbers employed and actively looking for work — was just 63.1% in March, a reflection of the growing numbers who have given up looking for work.

"Insecure work is endemic in modern Britain," TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady told demonstrators.

"Cuts in real pay, unsociable shift working hours and job insecurity are having a devastating impact on workers' families," said rail worker and Communist League leader Pete Clifford, who was marching in the RMT contingent. Well-known as a union activist at Manchester Piccadilly station, Clifford has just won back his job as a train dispatcher after a union-led campaign stood up to bosses' attempts to fire him. "That victory showed what is possible when union members stand together," he said.

"The unions have to answer the rulers' attacks through united action and lead workers to fight for automatic increases in every contract to protect wages against inflation. We need a cut in hours with no loss of pay to create jobs. Union bargaining should cover all workers — permanent and agency, full time and part time.

"Workers need to build our own party," Clifford said, "a party of labor that will fight in the political arena in the interests of all working people — at home and abroad."

Albama miners win solidarity in strike against Warrior Met Coal

BY SETH GALINSKY

Striking Warrior Met coal miners "are fighting against powerful forces in Alabama who want nothing more than to strip away everything we've earned," United Mine Workers of America Secretary-Treasurer Brian Sanson told the national convention of the AFL-CIO union federation in Philadelphia June 13. He was flanked by two striking miners. "Our fight is far from over," he said.

Some 1,100 UMWA members went on strike April 1, 2021, after Warrior Met refused to honor its promise to restore concessions in pay, benefits and work conditions imposed in 2016. Warrior Met attacked gains fought for and won by the union over decades when it took over the Jim Walter Resources mines in Brookwood, Alabama, after it declared bankruptcy the year before. Warrior Met was formed by several creditors of Jim Walter, including multi-trillion-dollar hedge fund BlackRock.

"We lost $6 an hour," striker Brian Kelly told the press at a solidarity rally in New York in October.

Warrior Met has spent at least $65 million on security, maintenance and other strike-related expenses while keeping some operations running with scabs. If it could increase production, Warrior Met stands to substantially boost its profits as the price of coal has doubled over the past year.

UMWA President Cecil Roberts announced at the UMWA convention in Las Vegas June 7 that a new round of negotiations with Warrior Met will start next week.

"That Warrior Met is willing to sit down with us is positive," UMWA Communications Director Erin Bates told the *Militant* by phone June 21. "But we need a lot more."

The strikers have won solidarity from other unions and workers in a wide range of industries including at weekly solidarity rallies in Brookwood, Alabama, at actions in front of BlackRock offices in New York and other protests around the country. The AFL-CIO convention, held right after the UMWA gathering, pledged more support.

At the UMWA convention, Roberts said that other unions and individuals have contributed some $2.5 million to the strike fund. After a three-week break, weekly rallies resumed June 22, with Roberts as the featured speaker.

Join the mineworkers' weekly strike support rallies in McCalla. Send messages and contributions made out to UMWA 2021 Strike Fund and send to UMWA Strike Fund, P.O. Box 513, Dumfries, VA 22026. Messages of support can be sent to District 20, 21922 Hwy. 216, McCalla, AL 35111. Email: umwadistrict20@bellsouth.net.

Moscow's Ukraine invasion stirs turmoil in Middle East

BY SETH GALINSKY

Putin's war on Ukraine is having a ripple effect in the Middle East, including weakening Moscow's forces in Syria. Along with Tehran-backed militias, the Russian intervention is essential to propping up the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad. This is intensifying the rivalry between capitalist regimes from Iran to Turkey as they jockey to advance the defense of their interests in the region. It has also led the Israeli rulers to step up efforts to prevent the counterrevolutionary regime in Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Along with Moscow's air power, which is key to protecting Assad's dictatorial rule, there have been as many as 63,000 Russian troops in Syria. Many now play support, not combat, roles.

The Moscow Times — a daily online publication that opposes the regime of Vladimir Putin in Russia — recently reported that Moscow withdrew several military units from Syria and abandoned some bases there to reinforce its battered and demoralized forces in eastern Ukraine. These moves have also been reported in the *Guardian*.

The *Jerusalem Post* noted June 12 that even if Moscow is "distracted" by the Ukraine war, there is no chance that Putin is pulling out of Syria, citing Moscow's need to ensure use of the port of Tartus to access the Mediterranean Sea and its broader interests in the region.

The *Post* shares the concern of many Arab regimes that the bourgeois clerical rulers in Iran would benefit most from a reduced Russian presence. The paper warned that there are "reports that Iran was already taking advantage of Russia's preoccupation with the war in Ukraine to expand into south and central Syria."

On June 12 Aleksandr Yefimov, Russia's ambassador to Damascus, told Syria's *Al-Watan* newspaper that any changes in deployments there are routine and have nothing to do with Ukraine.

Ankara threatens to move in

The Turkish government is also hoping to take advantage of Moscow's "distractedness." Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened June 1 to launch a major offensive against areas of Syria along Turkey's border controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which has been backed by both Washington and Moscow. Ankara has begun massing troops there. Erdogan stated that he wants to create a 20-mile "security zone" by pushing the SDF further south. The SDF backs the national rights of the Kurdish people, who are a majority in northern Syria.

There are more than 40 million Kurds in the Middle East, including in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Armenia. They comprise the world's largest population without their own state. The Turkish rulers worry that any advance for the Kurds in Syria will boost the fight of the some 20 million Kurds in Turkey for their rights.

Both Moscow and Washington demanded that Erdogan back off from his threats to invade. In response, Erdogan scaled back his threats, saying he plans to focus on targeting the towns of Manbij and Tal Rifaat.

Washington still has some 900 U.S. soldiers in northeast Syria, who carry out joint patrols with the Kurdish-led SDF, and protect U.S. interests in Syria's oil fields that the SDF controls.

Nubul and Zahraa, just to the south of Tal Rifaat, are controlled by Tehran-backed Shiite militias.

Since the start of Tehran's intervention in the civil war in Syria, the country has become a major transit point for all kinds of weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon and beyond. In an effort to keep a hand in with all the contending forces intervening in Syria, Moscow turns a blind eye to increasingly frequent Israeli government bombing attacks on Iranian-backed forces in Syria.

Asserting that Tehran has been smuggling satellite navigation systems on passenger flights, Israeli Air Force planes struck the international airport in Damascus twice in the last month, causing major damage to the runways and forcing the cancellation of all flights until at least June 20. These GPS devices can make rockets aimed at Israel much more accurate and deadly.

The Russian Foreign Ministry in Moscow registered a protest over the attacks by summoning Israel's ambassador, telling him that it needed clarification "within the framework of the existing Russian-Israeli mechanism to prevent dangerous incidents in Syria."

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

South Korea truckers strike wins rate hikes tied to inflation

After eight days on strike thousands of owner-operator truck drivers returned to work at major ports and container depots across South Korea June 15. Fighting to ensure their pay keeps up with skyrocketing fuel prices was at the heart of demands raised by the over 22,000 drivers, members of the Cargo Truckers' Solidarity Division of the Korean Federation of Public Service and Transportation Workers' Unions (KPTU).

The strike forced the shutdown of auto assembly lines, steel and cement factories and refineries, as well as shipments of tires, liquor and raw materials for semiconductors. Traffic at Busan, the world's seventh-largest container port, fell by two-thirds.

The price of diesel has gone up 45% over the last year, threatening the livelihood of some 420,000 "self-employed" truck drivers. Kang Myung-gil, a nonunion driver who joined the strike, told Reuters that he makes about $2,300 a month working 15 hours a day, but his monthly fuel bill has increased by $1,000.

"We are not beggars. We want our message to be heard for that fair share," driver Park Kyung-soo said as he cooked for fellow strikers in Incheon.

The strike began after the government refused to extend the Safe Rates System, which was set to expire at the end of the year. This applies to the transport of import/export containers and bulk cement, raising the rates paid to drivers every three months if fuel prices go up. The union wants Safe Rates made permanent and extended to all truck drivers

This is not just a pay question. "Economic pressure from low rates of pay forces drivers to engage in unsafe driving practices, such as overloading, speeding, and driving while fatigued," the union said in a statement. "Average working time of 16 hours a day for container drivers," they added, is one of the reasons for an increase in highway accidents over the last three years.

Union officials ended the strike after the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport agreed to extend the system — which needs to be ratified by the National Assembly — and to "discuss" its expansion to other truckers and "consider" increasing fuel subsidies.

The bosses — like the Chamber of Commerce and Industry — attacked the decision, saying it puts the burden of paying for higher wages on the shippers.

— *Seth Galinsky*



Yonhap News/Gyeonggi-do

Owner-operator truck drivers at Inland Container Base in Uiwang-si, South Korea, fight to stop trucks moving during eight-day nationwide strike that won rate hikes to fight inflation.

Ontario construction workers make gains as strikes continue

Tens of thousands of Ontario construction workers in the housing and the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors have returned to work after winning significant wage increases through strike actions begun in May. Their goal has been to counter the galloping inflation that has wreaked havoc on them and their families.

Painters and tapers, members of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, are set to strike the Painters Employer Bargaining Agency June 20. This follows the advances made by 15 of the 25 construction trades, including laborers, carpenters, crane operators, demolition workers, roofers, and sheet metal workers.

They will join the 500 glaziers in the painters union who downed tools June 13. They cut and install glass on construction projects.

The tapers and painters rejected a tentative agreement reached between union officials and the bosses for an $8 an hour increase over three years for the tapers and $5 for the painters. In many of the other trades where strikers rejected tentative agreements they succeeded in forcing the bosses to come up with larger wage increases.

At the high point of the fight, 43,000 strikers paralyzed the multi-billion-dollar construction industry across Ontario, in the midst of a construction boom centered in the Greater Toronto Area. This is where there is the highest concentration of construction workers, many of whom are recent immigrants. This province-wide strike movement is the first in many decades.

For the 15,000 carpenters, it was their first strike in 34 years. Many strikers who voted down the original deal were younger and learned important lessons in solidarity and sacrifice, Carpenters District Council of Ontario President Mike Yorke told the press. "This will be a strike that will be remembered by our younger generation throughout their working lives," he said.

Solidarity message for the painters, tapers and glaziers can be sent to IUPAT Ontario District Council 46, Bruno Mandic Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, 132 Toro Road, Toronto, ON M3J 2A9; Tel. (416) 630-9604; Email: www.iupat.on.ca.

— *John Steele*

Beijing suppresses Tiananmen vigil in Hong Kong

BY ROY LANDERSEN

"Compared to last year, government control this year was even stronger," Daniel Chan wrote the *Militant* from Hong Kong June 15. He was referring to the large police operation blocking protesters there trying to hold a vigil to mark the June 4 anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre by China's Stalinist rulers 33 years ago. Six were arrested as hundreds of people with candles converged on the police-barricaded Victoria Park.

The annual vigil commemorates the thousands killed and many more imprisoned or forced into exile when Beijing crushed their protests for political rights in 1989. A large encampment in the square, supported by millions of working people, was violently dispersed by the army with tanks and machine guns.

The Beijing regime called the challenge to its repressive rule "counter-revolutionary turmoil." Ever since, it has tried to erase the memory of this slaughter.

Beijing's censors rapidly removed an online video posted that day for a well-known brand of ice cream cake. It was decorated with cookies and a chocolate stick so it "looked like a tank." This "made people recall the famous photo of a protester standing in front of a tank during the June 4 massacre," Chan said.

"The Chinese and Hong Kong governments, in their attempts to stop people from remembering June 4, actually remind people not to forget the massacre," Chan noted.

Anniversary vigils were held in over 20 cities around the world, from New York to London and from Sydney to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, which borders China. Hundreds protested in Taiwan, the self-governing island 500 miles to the east of Hong Kong. Beijing claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has increasingly threatened to invade.

Under the direct intervention of Beijing over the past couple of years, Hong Kong authorities have clamped down, outlawing street protests, jailing political opponents and forcing critical media outlets to close. To smother further protests Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on Hong Kong. It criminalized protest actions by branding them as secession, subversion, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces, with penalties up to life imprisonment.

During the December student break, University of Hong Kong authorities removed a large blood-orange memorial sculpture to the victims of the Tiananmen carnage. The Pillar of Shame, depicting human torsos twisted together in anguish, had been there since 1998. Within days other universities in the city removed similar artwork.

Jens Galschiot, the Danish artist who created the monument, said now it also symbolizes Hong Kong's eroding freedoms. The sculptor created a full-scale replica for display around the world, including in Taiwan.

A 30-year-old woman, who gave her name as Lau, told the *Wall Street Journal* she attended Hong Kong's annual vigil every year and had set out to do so again. This time police stopped and searched her on her way to the park.

"They think even small sparks could start a prairie fire," she said.

Back Ukraine independence!

Continued from front page

ing effects on their markets and profits. Along with the imperialist ruling families in Washington, each European government pursues the interests of its own capitalist rulers first, foremost and always.

While professing to back Ukrainian sovereignty, many in Washington and European capitals look to battlefield realities to push Kyiv to make concessions to Moscow. Much of the capitalist media has slashed coverage of the invasion and Ukrainian resistance, claiming readers are losing interest.

Russian President Vladimir Putin claims Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine — the vast majority of working people there — back Moscow's occupation. But the simple fact is the Russian onslaught has driven tens of thousands to leave by any means necessary, overwhelmingly deeper into Ukraine, to escape from their "liberators." In areas already occupied by Moscow's troops, like in southern Kherson, protests and refusal to cooperate with their occupiers continue.

After Russian shelling destroyed an apartment block in Slovyansk in the Donetsk region, killing her elderly relative, Elena Valentivna told the June 18 *Washington Post*, "I'm Russian but I'm for Ukraine."

Ukrainian resistance continues

Workers across Ukraine have thrown themselves into defending their country, despite obstacles — like new anti-labor legislation and strictures on political rights — put in their path by Ukraine's capitalist government. (See accompanying article on contributions by Ukrainian rail workers.)

Speaking at a St. Petersburg forum June 17, Putin denounced the far-reaching sanctions imposed by Washington and other western powers as an "economic blitzkrieg against Russia." He insisted these measures were "more harmful" to the capitalist rulers who imposed them, pointing to spiraling inflation and economic crises internationally. His regime is banking on flagging support for Kyiv amid "war fatigue" in western capitals.

For weeks, concentrations of Russian troops have besieged Severodonetsk, the capital of Ukrainian-controlled territory in the Luhansk region, and its twin city across the river, Lysychansk.

Hundreds of civilians remain in Severodonetsk, most of which has been pulverized. They're holed up with Ukrainian forces in bunkers underneath the Azot chemical plant in what was the city's industrial area. As in the earlier siege of Mariupol, where civilians and Ukrainian forces retreated into the reinforced basements of the Azovstal steel works, they are resisting Russian calls to surrender.

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev repeated Moscow's overall goal in the war June 15. He boasted that "Ukraine might not exist at all" in a couple of years.

The new and self-serving moods of "war fatigue" sweeping the capitalist rulers in Washington and Europe threaten to ease Putin's path.

The leaders of the largest states in the European Union — Germany, France and Italy — finally visited the Ukrainian capital June 16. Despite their assurances, and that of Washington, that badly needed armaments are on the way, they brought little new to the table. Apart from Paris' offer of six additional howitzers, no new assistance was offered to Kyiv. Along with the president of Romania, they made a show of backing, with strings attached, Kyiv's bid to become a member of the EU in the distant future.

Kyiv's stocks of Soviet-era ammunition are running out. Russian shelling and missile attacks on rail lines and other infrastructure have reduced the arms flow from the west that the Ukrainian army is increasingly dependent on.

Washington has promised the most arms to Ukraine, followed by Warsaw and London, but only a fraction has been delivered. After Kyiv asked for 300 multiple rocket launchers, Biden ballyhooed his agreement, but approved a grand total of four, none of which have actually arrived. And he ruled out longer-range missiles that could "provoke" Moscow.

Latvia, with a population of 1.8 million and an economy the size of Vermont, has delivered more weapons to Ukraine than Germany, France or Italy.

French President Emmanuel Macron says Putin must not be "humiliated," hoping to assure the possibility of talks in the near future over the fate of Ukrainian workers and farmers, talks he seeks a role in to defend the interests of French imperialism. Rome has also floated a "peace" plan.

There is ongoing unrest and more partisan resistance by working people in areas that have fallen under Moscow's boot over the last few months. Their will to fight back is far from broken.

And there is opposition to Putin and his war inside Russia and occupied Ukrainian territory. A protest June 15 in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic was organized by wives of soldiers conscripted there by Moscow at the outbreak of the war. One woman said their husbands were supposed to return on June 6, but they have not been heard from since. And, despite promises, "for four months there were no payments to us."

Natalya Poklonskaya, who became Putin's chief prosecutor in Crimea, which Moscow annexed in 2014, was fired from her government job June 13 after speaking out against the invasion of Ukraine. She said it was a "catastrophe" with "entire cities destroyed" and "millions of refugees."

"The Socialist Workers Party calls for Moscow's troops out of Ukraine, all of Ukraine!" Chris Hoeppner, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress from Pennsylvania, said June 21, while joining striking Canadian National rail workers in Montreal. "And we oppose the punishing economic sanctions imposed by Washington and other imperialist governments that — regardless of who they target — fall hardest on Russian working people. These are an obstacle to building the working-class solidarity crucial to mobilizing the class forces capable of driving Moscow out of Ukraine."

Ukraine rail workers organize to resist Moscow's war



Trade Union of Railwaymen and Transport Construction Workers of Ukraine

"We are called the iron people," train driver Yurii Yelisieiev, 42, told the June 16 *Wall Street Journal*. He was referring to Ukrainian rail workers, who, as part of the resistance to Moscow's war, have kept this vital freight and passenger service running. Dubbed the country's "second army," its passenger stations and rail bridges, its substations and workshops, are a prime target of Russian attacks. At least 165 rail workers have been killed, over 250 injured and five captured by Moscow's invading forces.

The rail system is the biggest state-owned enterprise in Ukraine, with some 230,000 workers. It has transported everything from evacuating civilians to essential supplies, above, including grain exports and incoming weaponry.

For weeks after the invasion, Yelisieiev drove evacuation trains from Kharkiv, a city under attack near the Russian border, first to Kyiv and then to the relative safety of Lviv. Panicked civilians crowded aboard with mothers passing toddlers through train windows, "afraid the children would be trampled," he said. Up to 3,000 people crammed onto trains that usually carried 600.

Anastasia Tregub, 24, fled Kyiv in early March. "It was very scary to be on that train," she said, but the staff kept passengers calm. She needed "a person to talk with because I was alone," she recalls. Every Ukrainian passenger train has a steward who answers passengers' questions and deals with any problems that come up. One steward "talked to me all the time, as much as I needed," Tregub said. The railway workers, she says, "are our angels. They rescued and helped a lot of people."

Rail workers have ferried some 3.8 million people to safety, a million of whom were children, as well as some 120,000 pets.

— R. L.

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

We need our own party, a labor party

Statement by Lea Sherman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress from New Jersey, June 22.

Working people face high stakes in defending ourselves and our families from rampant price hikes and boss attacks today. The threat of an economic downturn combined with rising prices will worsen the social catastrophe capitalism breeds — from new wars abroad and mounting hardship and joblessness that make it harder to form and sustain a family, to drug addiction, suicide and violent crime.

There are examples of efforts to challenge these attacks, which are inherent to the dog-eat-dog capitalist system. This includes strikes by rail workers in Canada and England, coal miners at Warrior Met in Alabama and others. Getting out the word about these class battles and building solidarity from our unions is crucial to bring home victories and set an example to millions facing similar conditions.

Socialist Workers Party members in our unions are part of these struggles and present a program that defends workers' common interests.

They explain that Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and the death and destruction its forces are raining down points to the only future capitalism has to offer. The U.S. rulers and all the other declining capitalist powers today fight to defend their place in the imperialist pecking order by attacking workers' wages and conditions at home and in cutthroat battles for markets and profits against rivals worldwide.

Union officials urge workers to be "realistic" and rely on electing Democrats — one of the two parties used by the bosses to protect their system — to solve our problems. But we live under a system founded on irreconcilable conflict between the toiling majority and the propertied rulers, who squeeze enormous wealth from exploiting our labor. Collaborating with the ruling class and its parties will never end the source of the problems we face, but only perpetuate and deepen them. It is through uncompromising class struggle that working people acquire discipline, class consciousness and discover our own capacities and self-worth.

We have everything to gain from relying on our own forces, not Republicans, Democrats and middle-class "socialists," who join in promising us relief by petty reforms to capitalism's innate brutality. Just as we need to organize independently from the bosses on the job and strengthen our unions, so workers also need our own political voice. We need to build a labor party, forged in union battles, that can chart a course to unify all the exploited and oppressed.

This is a class-struggle road to take state power out of the hands of the ruling capitalist families and into our own hands, to form a workers and farmers government, and use it to forge a world based on solidarity and cooperation among toiling producers.

Assault on Trump, Supreme Court threat to rights

Continued from front page

committee is hoping something will stick in their efforts to bar Trump from holding office and, if possible, send him to prison. All nine members of the committee were appointed by Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who rejected Republican Party nominations and instead hand-picked seven Democrats and two Republicans who oppose Trump.

The committee takes aim at others they think will fit in with their claims of a conspiracy to destroy American democracy. They smeared Republican Georgia Rep. Barry Loudermilk, saying he gave protesters a "reconnaissance tour" of the Capitol Jan. 5. Capitol police cleared him after reviewing security footage.

The committee is demanding testimony from Virginia Thomas, a private citizen and wife of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Her offense? She is accused of sending texts and emails to Trump attorney John Eastman, former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and others expressing her opinion that Trump won the vote in 2020.

"I have no interest in that show," Ron Collins, a distribution center worker in Madison Town Park, Georgia, told the *Washington Post* about the Senate hearing, expressing sentiments held by millions of workers. "I wish they would focus on the things this country is dealing with."

Blow to political rights

The Republican and Democratic parties both rule on behalf of the U.S. capitalist class. But by treating their political differences as crimes, they deal a blow to political debate and set a dangerous precedent that can and will be used against working-class parties, like the Socialist Workers Party. This threatens the rights all working people need as we organize to defend ourselves and fight for our own class interests.

Trump released a statement on the hearings June 13. It's a rehash of his unsubstantiated claims that the 2020 election was stolen. Nearly 800 people who marched on the Capitol Jan. 6, 2021, have been arrested for assault and other crimes, at what the congressional committee and liberal press call an "insurrection" or "attempted coup." Almost 40% of the first 163 sentenced have been given prison time, ranging from one month for a student who took a photo in the Capitol to five years for a man who scuffled with the police.

As undemocratic as these hearings are — and the Democrats have plans for more of them — they are only part of the damage liberals and left-wing radicals are doing to political rights.

Since the May 2 leak of the Supreme Court's draft opinion overturning Roe v. Wade, some 24 violent assaults have been carried out on pregnancy centers.

A group called Jane's Revenge said it carried out some of the attacks, leaving graffiti on site reading, "If abortion isn't safe, you aren't either." On June 14 the group vandalized the Minneapolis center of the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life.

On June 10 pro-abortion activists threw an incendiary device through the window of the Gresham Pregnancy Resource Center near Portland, Oregon. The center provides counseling and medical services to women and new mothers.

In a press statement, Jane's Revenge threatened more violence that "may not come in the form of something so easily cleaned up as fire and graffiti.… Any anti-choice group who closes their doors, and stops operating will no longer be a target." It added, "But until you do, it's open season."

Protesters seeking to resurrect the fatally flawed Roe decision — which cut off needed debate on how to win women's rights — released maps of the homes of conservative Supreme Court justices and are organizing pickets there. A group called Ruth Sent Us published the details of the church that conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett goes to and the name of the religious school her children attend, targeting them for attack and undermining the right to worship.

Walls were put up around the Supreme Court June 9, a day after Nicholas John Roske was arrested outside the home of Justice Brett Kavanaugh. Roske was armed with a Glock handgun, ammunition, knife, zip ties and pepper spray. He told the police he planned to kill Kavanaugh and then commit suicide. Roske's arrest received little coverage in much of the liberal press.

"These types of actions do nothing to advance women's rights," Candace Wagner, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Pennsylvania, told the *Militant*. "They are the opposite of what working people need — the opportunity to discuss and debate how we can join together to protect ourselves and our families, fight for jobs, better wages and working conditions and the many other things we need, such as access to family planning, including contraception as well as safe and secure abortion."

A sign of the intensity of the factional warfare between Democratic and Republican parties was the decision by 27 House Democrats to vote against a bill to provide 24-hour security at the homes of all Supreme Court justices.

Scourge of rising prices

Continued from front page

Millions already live paycheck-to-paycheck. The immediate impact of recent price hikes is to tighten the squeeze on workers, making it harder and harder to put food on the table. Real wages declined in May by 3% from last year. Retired workers are finding the value of what little savings they've got plummeting. Credit card debt is beginning to grow, and higher interest rates will push that up further.

On June 15 the Federal Reserve announced a 0.75% rise in interest rates on its loans — the biggest increase since 1994. Jay Powell, chairman of the Fed, says more will follow. The European Central Bank announced plans to raise its rates for the first time in 11 years, and promised further raises in July and September.

Working people feel the impact of these rate hikes in many ways, including higher payments on mortgages, auto loans and other debts. The day after the Federal Reserve rate hikes were announced mortgage rates rose to 5.78%, the highest level since 2008, a jump of 85% since the beginning of the year.

"The labor movement needs to fight for a sliding scale of wages — escalator clauses in every contract and all benefits, so whenever prices rise our wages go up automatically," said Lea Sherman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress from New Jersey. "And we need a sliding scale of hours — 30 hours work for 40 hours pay — to spread work around as production slows."

While central banks around the world are raising interest rates, the Bank of Japan plans to keep rates around zero. The country's currency, the yen, is now worth less in relation to the dollar than any time since 2002. By keeping the yen low, Japan's capitalist rulers aim to increase exports and gain an edge in the fight for markets. This will bring them into sharper conflict with the Chinese rulers, who depend heavily on exports from China's industrial base to make profits.

Worldwide surge in prices

Soaring inflation worldwide is rooted in the crisis of the capitalist system, not something that bankers sitting in fancy offices and tinkering with interest rates can resolve. Governments have been printing vast amounts of money — outstripping the output of commodities — to try to help their own country's bosses compete with rivals. This is what spurs rising prices.

This is exacerbated by Moscow's assault on Ukraine, and the response of capitalist rulers in Washington and the EU to impose sanctions on Russia. Energy prices rose 39.2% across the eurozone.

"We used to eat beef all the time, now maybe twice a week at best," pensioner Maria Flier told the *Financial Times* at a street market in Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital. Almost all of her savings now go to groceries, she said. Inflation in Argentina is nearly 65%.

In Bogotá, Colombia, potato prices are up by 75%. "Tomatoes have also doubled in price," Angelica Neira, who runs a vegetable stand in that city, told the *Times*. "Most things have gone up 100% since the start of the year and if not doubled then they've gone up maybe 40% or 50%."

Rapidly rising prices hit working farmers especially hard, making it difficult for them to meet their costs of production. Diesel prices have gone from about $350 a day to $700-$800 a day, Ty Higgins of the Ohio Farm Bureau told the *Dayton Daily News* June 12. Fertilizer prices have also risen more than 230%. These conditions will force many farmers deeper into debt and some off the land altogether.

Michael Whitaker, a trucker in Waterloo, Iowa, who hauls construction and industrial machinery around the country told the *Investor's Business Daily* that diesel now costs him $4,000 a week.

"As this crisis deepens, bosses will continue putting it on the backs of working people," SWP candidate Sherman said. "Wherever workers are standing up to their assaults, like the nurses on strike at St. Michael's Medical Center in Newark, New Jersey, its vital our unions extend solidarity to strengthen their fight."

Taking the Socialist Workers Party's program to the toilers

Conference discusses working-class response to capitalist crises, sets party convention

BY STEVE CLARK
AND TERRY EVANS

"We have an unusual opportunity this year to go straight out of this conference into campaigning and other activity focused on the central political and programmatic questions we're discussing and clarifying here," said Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. He was speaking to some 350 people at the SWP-sponsored International Active Workers Conference in Springfield, Ohio, June 11.

This year's annual gathering, the largest since 2009, drew attendance from 10 countries, including members and supporters from the SWP's sister Communist Leagues in Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, as well as participants from France, Greece, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The end of COVID-related lockdowns and travel restrictions made it possible for the first time in three years to hold a truly international gathering, making it stronger politically.

"Take the SWP program to the toilers! Extend the reach of the party's candidates, press and books. Join the Socialist Workers Party!" — that was the banner at the front of the auditorium. At a rally the closing night, communist workers talked about highlights of the spring's successful propaganda campaigns and trade union and other activity, as well as projecting continued campaigning this summer.

These next steps include winning hundreds of subscription renewals from the nearly 1,700 new readers of the *Militant*; getting books by party leaders and other revolutionists into the hands of working people and youth; and using communist election campaigns and candidates to explain the party's program. There will be a special July effort to win a federal ballot spot in Pennsylvania — for the first time in many years — for SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in Philadelphia, Chris Hoeppner.

Speakers at the closing event also described organizing solidarity with hard-fought strikes by workers and their unions.

The SWP will hold a December convention, Barnes said. Based on discussion by the membership of material prepared by the party leadership, branches will choose delegates to debate and decide the party's course and next steps, and to elect a National Committee.

Capitalist crisis, workers' response

Conference proceedings were organized around four plenary reports on today's accelerating capitalist economic, social, and moral crises; sharpening conflicts among imperialist ruling classes and other powers; and the resulting receptivity among working people to the perspectives of the SWP and communist organizations in other countries.

The conference political report by Jack Barnes pointed to accelerating inflation, a developing sharp downturn in production and trade, and the consequences for the living and job conditions of workers and our families. Working people face the spread of deadly drugs, alcoholism and gambling addiction, as well as rising rates of mental illness, suicide and crime.

Amid these conditions, Barnes said, the working class more than ever has a stake in defending the constitutional rights, protections and political space we need to organize and fight. These rights are under assault by the bosses' government and political parties, with middle-class "progressives" more and more often on the front lines.

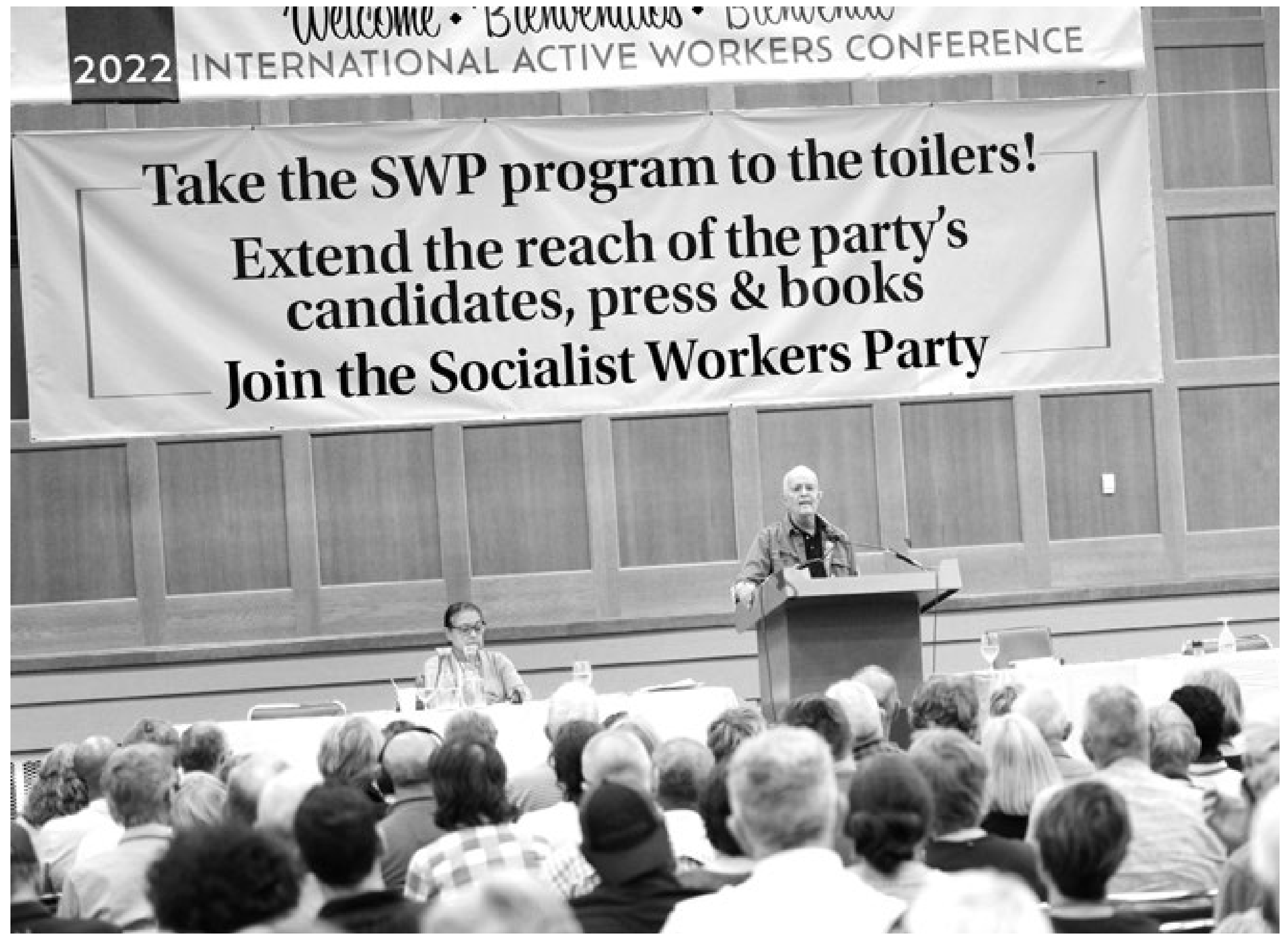
The presentation by SWP National Committee member Mary-Alice Waters — "The Family and Women's Emancipation: What Two Socialist Revolutions and Our Own Class-Struggle Experience Have Taught Us" — politically armed conference participants to more effectively bring a working-class voice into the raging debate opened earlier this year over the leaked U.S. Supreme Court draft that would overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade abortion decision.

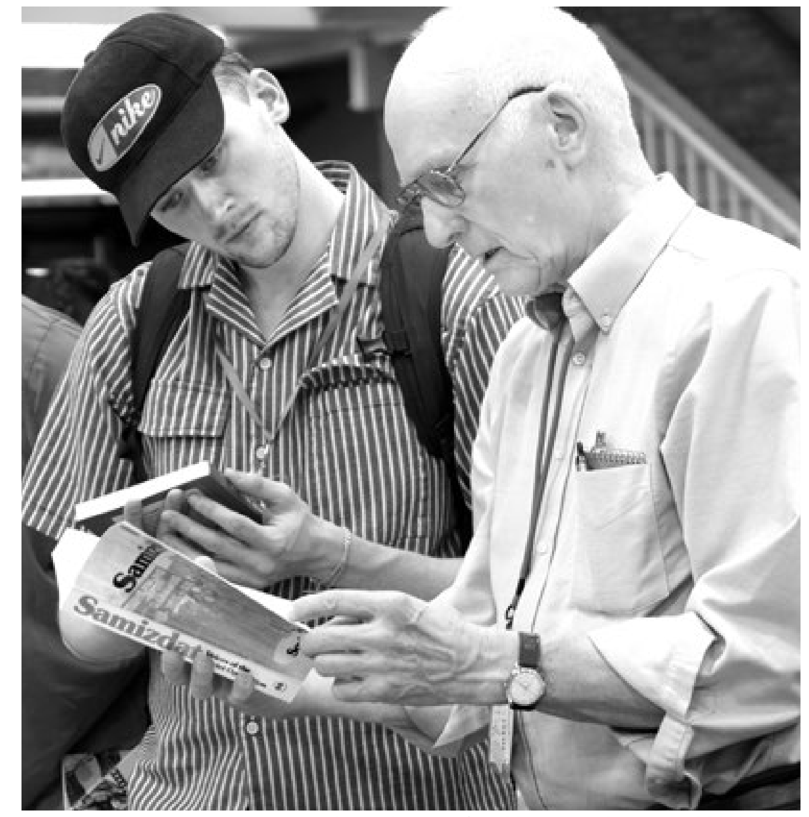


Militant/Annette Kouri
Gabrielle Prosser, SWP candidate for governor of Minnesota, right, shows party program, *Militant* to Angie Banks at May 25 police brutality protest in Minneapolis.

There was a presentation on "Moscow's War against Ukraine Opens New Stage in Crisis of Imperialist World Order" by *Militant* editor John Studer, as well as a report on the party's work in the unions and labor movement by SWP trade union director Mary Martin.

The presentations were complemented by two question and discussion sessions on the presentations, as well as four classes: "Independent Working-Class Politics vs. Class Collaboration: Lessons from the Struggle for Black Liberation"; "The SWP and Exploited Farmers: An Ally in the Fight for Working-Class Power"; "Lenin, the Bund and Forging the Bolshevik Party"; and "In Defense of Marxism: The Party's Proletarian Orientation and Our Communist Program."





Militant photos: Left, Hilda Cuzco; above, Arnold Weissberg
Left, Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes addresses conference. Vincent Auger, above left, at his first conference, said, "I want to learn more about SWP's history and its continuity going back to Bolsheviks."



Federation of Cuban Women
Vilma Espín, president of Federation of Cuban Women, at congress in Havana, March 1980, with Raúl Castro and Fidel Castro, right. Leaders of the revolution were determined to deepen women's involvement, remove any obstacles to their shouldering political responsibilities.

More than a dozen displays illustrating conference themes lined one side of the auditorium, attracting interested viewers before and after each session.

Tables after table of books welcomed participants as they entered the hall, with 620 bought overall. Top sellers were more than 50 copies of various issues of *New International* magazine featuring articles exploring the roots of today's breakdowns and wars, as well as *The Emancipation of Women* by V.I. Lenin; the 1957 SWP resolution *The Class Struggle Road to Negro Equality*; *Marxism and the Working Farmer*; and the latest Pathfinder Press title, *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity.*

Lively mealtime discussions and evening social activities capped the days.

Crises and war

On top of soaring prices and a coming economic downturn, said Barnes, today's world is marked by sharp shifts in the imperialist "world order" imposed by the victors of World War II. These conflicts, considerably aggravated by Moscow's war against the people of Ukraine, have been building for years.

Cutthroat competition for profits tears at the patchwork of stronger versus weaker capitalist states in the so-called European Union, with utter disregard for working people's life and limb. Currency and trade wars, and their transformation into shooting wars, are on the horizon. The expansionist-minded, Stalinist-molded regime in Beijing poses stepped-up challenges to Washington in Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere.

Capitalism's economic stresses on our families are pushing down birth rates and increasing pressures on families to care for aging parents.

The biggest target of the propertied rulers and their comfortable middle-class water carriers are working people, those Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential campaign scorned as "deplorables." The capitalist rulers not only deeply despise but increasingly *fear* them. It is this fear that's driving the crisis and factionalism shaking the rulers' twin Democratic and Republican parties and other U.S. political and state institutions.

But for the SWP, Barnes said, it is exactly these "deplorables" — of all backgrounds, regions, and skin colors, both sexes, city and country — "who we are trying to win. That's who we're trying to educate, to raise class consciousness. That's who we're learning from."

This fear and disdain for the working class among liberals and the radical left explains much of their panic, real or hyped, over the leaked Supreme Court draft. Insisting that workers and other small producers are the root of all prejudice and reaction — not the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression — the "social justice warriors" peddle the utterly false notion that reversing Roe v. Wade opens a "slippery slope" that threatens every hard-fought gain for the oppressed over the past half century.

Barnes pointed to the fact that polls show public support today for the right of two people of the same sex to marry has grown to over 70% of the population. Support for marriage rights of two individuals regardless of race is even higher.

There's broad support for "Miranda rights," which place restraints on how cops can entrap you. There's no substantial challenge to access to contraception, or motion toward restoring "sodomy laws" victimizing gays.

These rights conquered in past struggles are today recognized and supported by hundreds of millions. They won't be easily taken away, Barnes said, nor are significant forces organizing to do so.

These major shifts in attitudes extend to growing interest in trade unions, as well, Barnes said. A recent poll shows that more people look favorably on trade unions today than at any time in many decades.

Nothing similar can be said about attitudes toward abortion since Roe v. Wade was handed down in 1973. That ruling undermined the fight for women's rights. The subsequent half century has left popular opinion on the right to choose an abortion more class-divided and polarized than ever before.

Barnes said that the constitutional rights, the federal system of checks and balances, and other limitations and restrictions on government powers — ratified some 230 years ago by the ruling families to buffer factional divisions among themselves — better serve the needs of workers to organize and fight independently of our exploiters and oppressors than do the high-flown laundry lists of "granted" rights that mark constitutions in France, Canada, South Africa and other "enlightened" regimes.

Better for working people to have protections *against* the bosses' state, than "rights" (conditionally) "given" to us *by the state*.

The U.S. rulers, Barnes said, seek to mask the social ills bred by the profit system by turning these evils into their opposite. He gave the example of today's New York City subway ads, which claim that using drugs the "right way" can be "empowering." And Mayor Eric Adams' celebration of the legalization of marijuana in the state as a big moneymaker and investment attraction for the city fathers.



USW Local 1449
Steelworkers members locked out by Collins Aerospace in Union, West Virginia, march there June 4, getting out word about their fight and winning solidarity.

Barnes pointed out that the late U.S. Senator from New York — Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Democratic Party politician, member of both the Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon administrations, and Social Democratic-leaning supporter of capitalism — coined an accurate term for this phenomenon: "*Defining deviancy down*." It describes, Moynihan said, how some officials and public figures, in face of growing social ills, "benefit from redefining the problem as essentially normal."

SWP branches, Barnes said, will be organizing to study this article, along with others by Moynihan that describe how the family under contemporary conditions is the only place working people can turn for help in face of joblessness, social inequality and other crises imposed on us.

The future for working people in the U.S., Barnes emphasized, remains intertwined with Cuba's socialist revolution, which marked the renewal of communist leadership in the Americas and beyond. The Cuban toilers' conquest of state power, under the leadership of Fidel Castro and the Rebel Army, set a powerful example for working people in the U.S. of what we are capable of accomplishing as we build a revolutionary workers party in this country.

Defend Ukraine! Moscow out now!

"No political organization is better prepared to explain the stakes for working people in defeating Moscow's invasion of Ukraine than the Socialist Workers Party," *Militant* editor and SWP National Committee member John Studer said in his conference report. Studer led three reporting teams to Ukraine after the working-class and popular Maidan uprising of 2014 overthrew the Moscow-backed regime. They reported on the conditions facing workers and their fight for national independence.

Since Moscow's invasion early this year, party members have campaigned with an SWP National Committee statement that explains that the party "is mobilizing its candidates to use the 2022 election campaign to get out the truth and present a foreign policy that starts from the interests of the toilers at home and internationally." The statement gives unconditional support to the fight for Ukrainian independence and sovereignty and demands an immediate end to Moscow's military operations and occupation.

It demands a halt to all U.S. economic, banking, and trade sanctions against Russia, whose devastation falls overwhelmingly on working people in Russia, undercutting solidarity between workers and soldiers in the two countries. The statement also demands Washington withdraw *all* its nuclear weapons and armed forces from Europe.

Citing documents drafted by V.I. Lenin from the opening years of the voluntary Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Studer explained that the SWP's support for Ukrainian self-determination is rooted in the party's political continuity with the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution and Communist International.

Party members have gotten the *Militant* — the only working-class source of news on the war and its consequences — into the hands of co-workers on the job, on their doorsteps, at strike picket lines and to working farmers.

Studer described the interest in issues of *New International* magazine by participants at recent book fairs in Havana, Tehran, Los Angeles and elsewhere in the U.S. These issues explain the root causes of wars in the imperialist epoch, and how the U.S. rulers emerged from World War II atop the imperialist pecking order.

But the so-called American Century abruptly came to an end before it had barely begun, with Washington's defeats in the Korean and Vietnam wars as milestones, matched by a relative erosion of its commanding economic dominance as well.

With the coming apart of the Soviet Union at the opening of the 1990s, the U.S. had lost the Cold War, not won it, as many of its political, military and academic apologists initially trumpeted. This fact is registered in the trail of stalemated or lost wars waged by Washington in Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

This outcome for U.S. imperialism, however, has not been accompanied by the rise of any new capitalist power to replace it, Studer said. The impossibility of a historic surrogate for the world's final empire was aptly put some 35 years ago in the SWP resolution, "What the 1987 Stock Market Crash Foretold," published in *New International* no. 10. "Despite intensifying competition for profits on the world market," it says, "the rival national ruling classes are chained together in their decline, with the U.S. capitalist rulers at their head."

Today, exacerbated by Moscow's invasion, rival capitalist powers are rushing to prepare for future conflicts. The direction of capitalist development — a march toward fascism and world war, horrifically confirmed in the last century — is clearer to see for working people.

"The future of humanity depends on the independent political organization of the world's toilers," Studer said. "It is in our hands to take war-making powers out of the hands of the exploiters, to prevent the calamities that imperialism is marching, and stumbling toward.

"But before such calamitous events, the working class here will have our chance. We can forge a mass revolutionary proletarian party able to mobilize and lead millions to make a socialist revolution and conquer state power."

During a lively question and answer session after Studer's report, one participant asked whether an SWP candidate elected to Congress would support the U.S. government sending arms to Ukrainians.

"We have no quarrel with how Ukrainians get arms to defend themselves from Moscow's assaults," Studer said. "But the longstanding proletarian internationalist position of the communist movement is and remains, "Not one dime, not one soldier for the U.S. rulers and their war machine! No political confidence in the bosses' government!"

The U.S. rulers do *nothing* other than advance their own capitalist interests in everything they do. If they extend military aid, it comes with unprincipled strings attached. What's more, growing layers of the U.S. ruling class, as well as the rulers of France, Germany, Italy and elsewhere, are maneuvering today to pressure the Ukrainian government to give in, settle with Moscow, and make substantial territorial and political concessions. These imperialist voices want to end a war they increasingly see as a threat to their own interests.

"Decisions about starting and stopping wars are class decisions. The only way forward for working people is to fight to unite the toilers in Rus-

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SWP program to toilers



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Conference participants learn about plans by party supporters to expand the production of Pathfinder books in numerous formats to reach working people who are blind or visually impaired.

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sia and Ukraine — as well as in the United States and elsewhere — to defeat Moscow's invasion."

The family and women's rights

In 1973 the *Militant* hailed as a victory the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision overturning laws in 46 states that restricted a woman's access to abortion during the first three months of pregnancy.

"Fifty years of experience in the class struggle have taught us that judgment was inaccurate," said SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters in opening her conference report. "It soon became clear that the court edict set back the fight to repeal all laws criminalizing or restricting abortion."

The ruling — decided by the Supreme Court on a *political*, not constitutional basis — "short-circuited the momentum that was gaining ground in the political fight to win a majority of the working class, male and female, to recognize that a woman's right to decide whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term is a precondition for women's equality. And to understand that ending women's status as the "second sex" is central "to the program the working class must fight for on the road to emancipation."

Nowhere was that road presented more clearly than by Frederick Engels, one of the founders of modern communism, Waters said. "True equality between men and women," he wrote in 1885, "can become a reality only when the exploitation of both by capital has been abolished, and private work in the home has been transformed into a public industry."

Access to abortion under medically safe conditions has sharply declined from its high point soon after the 1973 ruling, Waters said. The meritocratic leadership of groups like the National Organization for Women "became not much more than an electoral appendage of the Democratic Party, with little interest in family questions confronting the working class. At the same time, abortion opponents were allowed to grab 'the right to life' as their banner."

As opposed to sanctifying what has been from the start a bad Supreme Court edict, Waters said, "our starting point is that there can be no road to women's liberation without dealing with the broader social crises bearing down on the working-class family and addressing the challenges and responsibilities that fall on women as the bearers of new life."

In the question and answer session later that day, one participant disagreed with Waters' assertion that an overturn of Roe v. Wade would be positive. She asked Waters what she meant when she said in her report that "the SWP is the party of life, not death."



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Mary-Alice Waters at conference: "Women must take back the banner of life from opponents of women's emancipation."

"Getting Roe out of the way will create an opportunity for working people to have the discussion we need," Waters replied. "The job of the courts is not to impose legislation," as it did in this case, "but to uphold rights and protections that have been wrested from the ruling class in struggles going back to the Bill of Rights." The 1973 ruling was an obstacle to fighting for access to safe and secure abortions, which is just one part of the broader working-class fight for both women and men today, she said.

It's essential to "answer those who cloak their assaults on women's rights — including decriminalization of abortion — under a 'pro-life' mantle. The working-class party that fights for the liberation of humanity is a party of life. We must take back that banner as ours."

During her presentation, Waters noted crucial lessons from the socialist revolutions in Russia in 1917 and Cuba in 1959. The Bolshevik-led revolution "was the first opportunity for a government of the working class to lead a fight for women's equality."

She pointed to communist leader V.I. Lenin's description of the domestic slavery confronting women in Russia a century ago. Those degrading conditions will change, Lenin said, "only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding state power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its *wholesale transformation* into a large-scale socialist economy begins."

As fellow Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky explained, that required providing apartments and rural dwellings with running water and electricity. It required schools, jobs, laundries, and child care centers, eradicating illiteracy and combating drunkenness and domestic violence.

Advances in the Soviet Union initiated under Lenin's leadership and defended by Trotsky were reversed by the Stalin-led counterrevolution, one of the greatest defeats the working class has ever faced, Waters said.

Drawing lessons from the Soviet experience in his 1936 book *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky wrote, "You cannot 'abolish' the family, you have to replace it." That's a task that can only be advanced, Waters said, by eliminating capitalism's economic compulsion on which the family is founded.

Women in Cuba

The second great socialist revolution of the last century took place in Cuba. Fidel Castro and other revolutionary leaders were determined from the outset to deepen women's involvement in all aspects of social life, clearing away obstacles to their shouldering political responsibilities to advance the revolution. Fidel insisted that a woman's organization, what became the Federation of Cuban Women, be established to lead these efforts. Those enormous accomplishments are recorded in the book edited by Waters, *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution within the Revolution.*

The center of the fight for women's emancipation today is not abortion, Waters concluded. It's the family. It's part of a course to advance "the working-class fight for state power — to create the material and social conditions that will enable women and men to realize the basic conditions of our humanity. That means full participation in social labor *and* the ability to make conscious decisions, benefiting from advances in medical science, related to reproduction as well as production.

"That's the road not only to the emancipation of the working class," she said, "but to eradicating the historical roots of women's oppression."

SWP's trade union work

SWP members are active in our unions and carry out work in the broader labor movement, Mary Martin, the party's trade union director, told the conference. "Workers are showing what we are capable of, as we expand solidarity with each other's struggles."

She pointed to several strikes over the last year by members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union at Frito-Lay, Nabisco, Kellogg's and Jon Donaire. Workers fought to push back "suicide shifts" that wreck family life and endanger workers' health and safety, winning some gains and important solidarity.

The SWP has built groups of party members, called fractions, in the BCTGM everywhere the party has a branch, alongside fractions in freight rail unions in six cities. It has also expanded the kinds of jobs party members take in BCTGM-organized workplaces, opening up both union and political life to more of the party's cadres.

Martin reviewed some recent experiences in the unions. Party members have joined co-workers and others in expanding backing for the United Mine Workers union, which has been on strike against Warrior Met Coal in Brookwood, Alabama, for more than a year.

They've helped win support among workers and farmers for a two-day strike by rail workers on the Canadian Pacific in March.

And they've gotten out the truth, in the pages of the *Militant* and through union channels, about the deaths of two bakery workers in nonunion jobs in North Carolina.

At the same time, SWP members carry out the party's propaganda campaigns among co-workers on the job, as they join week in and week out in branch activity to expand the reach of the party's program among working people at their doorsteps, on picket lines, and at social protests and political meetings.

This trade union and political work described by Martin was followed up the last evening of the conference at a lively rally, with remarks by 13 conference participants from the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and New Zealand.

Maggie Trowe, a member of the Cincinnati branch, described the efforts she and her BCTGM co-workers organized there to back the Alabama miners.

John Hawkins, a party member from Chicago, talked about the work SWP members did recently to win support from working farmers in the U.S. for a solidarity message to Cuban farmers on the 63rd anniversary of Cuba's sweeping land reform (see article in issue no. 23) and the 61st anniversary of the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP). The worker-farmer alliance that made possible Cuba's socialist revolution was built on the bedrock of the land reform.

Osborne Hart, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from Pennsylvania, described the openings to use the campaign, including concentrated campaigning beginning right after the conference. The party there is petitioning to place the party's candidate, Chris Hoeppner, on the ballot for U.S. Congress from Philadelphia.

The rally concluded with a fund appeal that raised $44,769 for the party's work, and a spirited singing of "The Internationale," the fighting anthem of the working class the world over.

"I enjoyed the class on Independent Working-Class Politics," Jacob Pirro from Montreal who was attending his first conference, told the *Militant*. "During the civil rights movement the U.S. Communist Party told its members to help get Democrats into office."

"In contrast to the CP, Malcolm X and the SWP taught fighters for Black rights, 'Don't trust your oppressor.'" That same question faces fighters trying to change the world today, he said.

"I want to learn more about the history of the SWP and its continuity going back to the Bolsheviks," said Vincent Auger from Seattle, also at his first party conference.

The day after the SWP conference, organized supporters of the communist movement from around the world met with party leaders to plan their coming year's work. The supporters' auxiliary organizes the production, printing and distribution of Pathfinder books by SWP and other revolutionary leaders and systematically works to raise funds the SWP uses for its political work.

This year supporters organized a table in the auditorium to show participants the work they've done to carry out the party's proposal in late 2021 to begin formatting books for the blind and visually impaired in several accessible formats, from audio books to braille. It was one of the most visited displays at the conference.